United Nations A/67/PV.98

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

98th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 4 September 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly concluded its consideration of agenda item 17 at its 61st plenary meeting, on 21 December 2012. In order for the Assembly to take action on the draft resolution before it today, it will be necessary to reopen the consideration of agenda item 17. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen its consideration of agenda item 17?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 17 (*continued*)

Information and communications technologies for development

Draft resolution (A/67/L.78)

The President: Members will furthermore recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 21 September 2012, the General Assembly decided to allocate agenda item 17 to the Second Committee. To enable the General Assembly to take action expeditiously on the draft resolution, may I also take it that the Assembly wishes to consider agenda item 17 directly in plenary meeting and proceed immediately to its consideration?

It was so decided.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan to introduce draft resolution A/67/L.78.

Mr. Mehdiyev (Azerbaijan): I have the honour, on behalf of the sponsors — Afghanistan, Belarus, China, Georgia, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and my own country, Azerbaijan — to introduce draft resolution A/67/L.78.

The draft resolution, submitted to the Secretariat on 28 August, is the result of several informal consultations convened by the delegation of Azerbaijan in an open and transparent manner throughout August, as well as bilateral meetings, information sessions and briefings. Following its submission, the delegation of Azerbaijan continued its engagement with interested delegations to accommodate the remaining concerns and to reach an agreement on the text. In that respect, I am pleased to introduce the relevant changes to document A/67/L.78.

First, the title of the draft resolution should read as follows: "Developing cooperation for better connectivity and telecommunications transit routes in the Trans-Eurasian region".

Secondly, the second preambular paragraph has been largely merged with paragraph 1, which should read as follows:

> "Emphasizes the importance of improving connectivity and telecommunications transit routes in the Trans-Eurasian region and, in this regard, takes note of the proposal on the establishment

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of the Eurasian Connectivity Alliance, aimed at highlighting synergies among Governments, the private sector, civil society, academia and international development institutions towards improving the development of regional telecommunications transit routes".

Thirdly, paragraph 2 should read as follows:

"In this regard, invites Governments, the United Nations system and international development institutions, within their current mandates and core competencies and within existing resources, as well as the private sector, civil society and academia, to engage in relevant discussion on the proposed Eurasian Connectivity Alliance."

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all delegations for their flexibility and cooperation. My special thanks goes to the sponsors.

The draft resolution before us seeks to renew attention and support for the proposal to establish a Eurasian connectivity alliance, initially recognized in consensus-based resolution 67/194, entitled "Building connectivity through the Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway". The Eurasian connectivity alliance is being proposed as a platform for a regional structure that can help to enhance transregional cooperation in the area of information and communications technology (ICT), assist Governments in better responding to the needs and challenges existing in the ICT sector through broader regional dissemination, attract stronger interest from the private sector, as well as effectively manage the telecommunications infrastructure by facilitating experience- and knowledge-sharing.

The support of Member States is crucial for the success of the initiative. We believe that such broad political support can contribute to a more conducive environment to address the issue of connectivity at a broader regional level and to consolidate ongoing efforts in the respective area.

Equally important is the interest of and cooperation with the International Telecommunication Union and the United Nations, given their experience, technical expertise and outreach capacity through established channels for communication with Government and industry leaders and civil society. We strongly believe that the adoption of the draft resolution will further encourage discussion of the proposal at the intergovernmental level and planning for the work ahead of us.

In conclusion, I once again thank all delegations for their constructive participation and support to the process and invite them to join the list of sponsors and to adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.78, as orally revised, entitled "Developing cooperation for better connectivity and telecommunications transit routes in the Trans-Eurasian region".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/67/L.78, as orally revised?

Draft resolution A/67/L.78, as orally revised, was adopted (resolution 67/298).

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of position, I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Sahakov (Armenia): I have requested the floor after the adoption of resolution 67/298 in order to explain my delegation's position on it.

My delegation recognizes that regional connectivity solutions can enable countries to achieve economies of scale by offering reduced costs and better quality of services. We are ready to discuss possible options for enhanced regional connectivity in that regard.

Armenia strongly advocates, in every possible sphere, the principles of regional cooperation, which are significant contributors to peace, confidence-building and relations based on the general principle of good neighbourliness. In that respect, it is important to note that the realization of the regional project should be open to all interested States, including Armenia. We also believe that it should not result in the creation of more favourable conditions for those countries whose aim is to use economic projects as tools to impose pressure in order to reach their political goals.

Ms. Derderian (United States of America): The United States strongly supports the goal of increased connectivity and the need to bridge the digital divide, and has spoken out in favour of many of the initiatives that we understand resolution 67/298 intends to further. The process and timing of the resolution are, however, less than ideal. Resolution 67/194, which was adopted earlier during this session, also addressed the Eurasian

connectivity alliance. In addition, taking this matter up so late in the session, after the Second Committee has concluded its work, deprives delegations of the benefit of their experts and does not facilitate careful deliberation.

Nevertheless, the United States joined the consensus on the resolution and looks forward to working with its proponents and other Member States to expand connectivity in the Trans-Eurasian region.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union, who wishes to make a statement following the adoption of the resolution.

Mr. Poulsen (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States.

Let me start by emphasizing the importance that the European Union (EU) and its member States attach to the development of information and communications technology (ICT) and to further regional integration and connectivity in the Eurasian region and beyond. The EU is currently providing funding for a range of ICT projects that address Eastern Europe and Central Asia, including €5 million for the Central Asia Research and Education Network, which links scientists and students in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan with more than half a million users in 500 universities and research institutions, and provides access to European and global research communities; €1 million for regional electronic communications and regulatory framework harmonization between the European Union and its Eastern Partnership partner countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine; €2.1 million to ensure the stable operation of the connections of South Caucasus national research and education networks with the European academic network; and additional funding for the Eastern Partnership partner countries and Central Asian countries through the Poverty and Information and Communication Technologies in Urban and Rural Eastern Africa ICT research project, which is expected to be succeeded by additional projects in the same region that are currently under formulation.

Despite the substantial, concrete support to the development of regional information and communications technology connectivity in Eurasia, and while we do not want to oppose a consensus in the Assembly on the resolution on cooperation for better connectivity and data communications transit routes, the European Union and its member States would like to stress that we do not see specific value added in resolution 67/298. Indeed, it is not common practice for the General Assembly to issue multiple resolutions on the same topic during the same session, unless there are prevailing reasons to do so. Resolution 67/194, adopted a few months ago during this session, includes a specific paragraph — paragraph 7 — that takes note of the proposal to establish a Eurasian connectivity alliance. We recall that we were not in favour of a standalone resolution at that time, given that the yearly ICT resolution allows us to take stock of and evaluate the progress of regional initiatives. However, in the end, we engaged constructively, on the understanding that any follow-up would be integrated in the next ICT resolution, during the sixty-eighth session.

On the issue of substance, we believe that resolution 67/194 provides the right General Assembly measures, both emphasizing the importance of improving regional connectivity and taking note of the proposal to establish a Eurasian connectivity alliance. We do, however, believe that the proper place for these messages are the ICT resolution, and we will work to ensure that any follow-up to today's resolution is integrated in the ICT resolution at the sixty-eighth session.

In conclusion, the European Union and its member States remain committed to practices that promote the effectiveness of the General Assembly. The European Union and its member States are also committed to remaining strong partners with the Eurasian region on ICT and regional integration.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 17?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.